

D'var Torah by Rabbi M. Jaroslawicz for Parshas Shemini 5775 (2015)

This week's Parshas Shemini begins with Moshe Rabbeinu telling his brother, Aaron, to take a calf for a "Sin" Offering and an unblemished ram for an "Ohla" Offering, and offer them both "before Hashem." Moshe then instructed Aaron to tell the Children of Israel to take he-goats for Sin Offerings, and unblemished calves and sheep in their first year as Olah Offerings. They should also take bulls and rams for Peace Offering sacrifices before Hashem, and Meal Offerings mixed with oil, "for TODAY Hashem appears to you."

Aaron and the nation all took what Moshe had commanded of them. They approached and stood before the Ohel Mo'ed and before Hashem.

Moshe tells them; "This is the thing that Hashem has commanded you to do; then the glory of Hashem will appear to you."

The next Passuk gets confusing. Moshe says to Aaron. "Come near to the Mizbe'ach and perform the service of your Sin-Offering, and your Olah-Offering and provide atonement for yourself and for the people..."

The confusing part is where Moses tells Aaron: "KRAV" ("Draw Near") the Mizbe'ach. That word implies that there was a HESITATION on Aaron's behalf to move close and do his job. Why would Aaron hesitate?

Rashi quotes a Midrash to answer this difficulty. Rashi says that Aaron was ashamed and afraid to get close to the Mizbe'ach, to which Moshe responded and comforted him by saying;

"Lamah attah bosh? L'kach nivchartah!"

Literally translated this means, "Why are you ashamed? For THIS you were created!" As if to say, "This is your destiny."

Others translate this Midrash with a slightly different twist. "L'kach nivchartah" is not meant to mean, "for THIS you were created" (so don't be ashamed). Instead, "L'kach nivcharta" means that, for this very reason (the fact that you are ashamed and unassuming), "FOR THIS REASON YOU WERE SELECTED." Your humility makes you worthy. So, do not sit back and hesitate, "DRAW NEAR!"

We just ended the most amazing Yom Tov experience that we as a Shul have shared together in a long time. Although many of our tried-and-true members were away for the entire week, those guests who came to join us stepped up to the plate. Nobody hesitated to participate with the Torah reading, with supplementing Divrei Torah, with leading the Davening and singing Hallel. Everyone who was asked to "Draw Near" and get involved did so -- with sincerity and love -- and produced an extremely uplifting Holiday performance.

There seemed to be an unspoken, underlying understanding of "L'kach nivcharta." There was a widespread feeling of camaraderie, where everyone felt the individual responsibility to enhance the experience of the entire congregation. The result was beautiful, heartfelt and a pleasure in which to participate.

I would like to personally thank all of those guests who participated and made this a wonderful Pesach. I hope that the example that you all set will act as a guiding light to all of our existing members. It would do us justice to remember that it is the power of HUMILITY that allows a person to "Draw Near" to Hashem, and not the weakness of self-focus.

Now, more than ever, as many of our winter members head back north for the summer months, we need the participation and involvement of EVERYBODY. Whether you are asked to help make Minyan during the week, or to participate in a Shul fundraiser or event, please remember, "L'kach nivcharta." This is the real reason that we are on this world, to do for others.

Thank you and have a great Shabbos.